



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM  
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

# The relevance of human rights norms and data to ensuring the effectiveness of VNRs

18 July 2023, 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 11, UNHQ

**Organizers:** European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (EU FRA) and OHCHR

**Date:** 18 July 2023, 1:00pm - 2:00pm EDT

**Modality:** In-person meeting held under the Chatham House Rule, conducted in English

**Registration form:** <https://forms.office.com/e/9Tszv3BAC2>

## Summary:

The fact that 341 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) have been presented or committed to since 2016 attests to the importance of such reviews to delivering on the global goals and tracking progress made. At the half-way point to the 2030 Agenda however, the world finds itself severely off track and as we search for transformative actions to accelerate achieving the 2030 Agenda. Against that backdrop, we should recall the role of human rights in advancing the SDGs: They are recognized in the 2030 Agenda and in Our Common Agenda report as binding international obligations and problem-solving tools that safeguard lives and livelihoods. Upholding human rights obligations, applying human rights approaches and using human rights data can help place the most vulnerable at the center of policymaking, implementation, and monitoring of progress made. This VNR Lab will provide an opportunity to discuss the benefits and impact of approaches anchored in human rights norms and data in the context of the VNRs. Starting the discussion by reflecting on relevant experience of EU Member States and the European Union, the event aims to offer space for all Member States and stakeholders to share examples of good practices in using human rights data, human rights analysis and approaches to strengthen the VNRs and consequently also 2030 Agenda implementation.

## Speakers:

- H.E. Ambassador Silvio Gonzato, Deputy Head, Delegation of the European Union to the UN
- Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights
- Ms. Andreea Mocanu, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Romania to the UN
- Dr. Siobhan McInerney-Lankford, Head of Equality, Roma and Social Rights Unit, EU FRA
- Ms. Julie Rosenkilde, Steering Group, SDG Watch Europe

**Moderator:** Mr. Neil Pierre, Acting Director, OISC, UNDESA

**Background:**

Voluntary National Reviews are a key process facilitating review and course correction, as needed, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level. The impressive number of 341 VNRs presented or committed to since 2016 attests to the fact that VNRs are globally recognized as vital to delivering on the global goals.

The 2030 Agenda is anchored in human rights norms and standards, as per its paragraph 10, which states that the 2030 Agenda is “grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome”. The 2030 Agenda conveys its vision of a “world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity” (para 8), with Member States pledging to ensure that no one will be left behind in this process, to be implemented through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

This, in turn, means that the transformative ambition of the 2030 Agenda can only be achieved by placing rights and right-holders, especially those left behind, at the center of policymaking and implementation. To do this effectively, human rights data - and disaggregated data in particular - as well as human rights analysis and approaches, are indispensable tools which can help ensure all people and their right to development are front and center in policy design, implementation, and monitoring.

**This event aims to create a space for exchange of experiences and good practices in developing VNRs by relying on human rights obligations and by identifying and using relevant human rights data, analyses, and approaches. It will provide an opportunity for Member States, inter-governmental organizations, and all interested stakeholders to learn more about the experiences of integrating human rights data and analysis into selected voluntary reviews presented at the HLPF this year. All participants are encouraged to share relevant experiences and discuss the benefits of a rights-based approach to monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on VNRs.**

**Guiding questions:**

- Why is it important that human rights inform the 2030 Agenda implementation and monitoring in all its dimensions?
- Noting that VNRs are not human rights reports, why it is nonetheless important to reflect human rights issues in these and apply human rights approaches in VNRs?
- How were human rights integrated in the formulation of the 2023 VNRs and what are some key lessons learned?
- What is the added value of institutions such as the EU Fundamental Rights Agency in the process of preparing VNRs? What lessons learned could be applicable to other countries and regions?
- What is the role of civil society actors in VNR processes with respect to human rights issues in particular? What space do they have to engage and contribute? Is that space adequate and does it enable meaningful engagement?
- How can institutions such as the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, civil society, UN entities and others assist Member States to connect relevant data with the human rights legal obligations countries have?